



Episode 3 Transcript

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Evan Centopani - How A Pro Grows

Nick Collias: We're rolling, all right. Hey there everybody, welcome to The Bodybuilding.com Podcast. It's a beautiful fall day here in Boise, Idaho. Trees are turning yellow and dropping weight like contest prep around here.

Dr. Krissy Kendall: How long have you thought of that one?

Nick: Five whole minutes, I wrote that down 5 whole minutes ago, all about the metabolism of autumn. It's like a T.S. Eliot poem. I'm Nick Collias, one of the editors of Bodybuilding.com, and to my right is Dr. Krissy Kendall here to punch holes in everyone's most cherished fitness beliefs.

Krissy: Hello, hello.

Nick: Across the table we've got none other than IFBB pro bodybuilder/Animal athlete [Evan Centopani](#). He is not catabolic. He's growing.

Krissy: As we speak, right now.

Nick: He's kind of Krissy and I taped together for his biceps, I think. If you don't know Evan, if you've ever seen a black and white video of a big bodybuilder shopping in New Jersey, there's about a 1 in 8 chance that it's him. If there were any vegetables in the cart, it was definitely him.

Evan Centopani: It was probably me.

Nick: Something about vegetables and you, that's kind of how we associate you. He's the guy who thinks vegetables are the fourth macro nutrient. How much vegetables do you eat on a daily basis?

Evan: There's no other bodybuilders who eat vegetables, so it's like you're the guy who eats vegetables. Is that out of the ordinary? On a daily basis, definitely with every meal, with exceptions

of sometimes breakfast. If it's eggs and oatmeal, spinach doesn't really go so well with it. With all animal protein meals, whether it's chicken, fish, steak, et cetera, there's always some type of vegetable on there. I cannot eat animal protein without a vegetable.

Nick: Really, so your tastes rebel against it?

Krissy: Is it more of a texture thing, or do you just feel like you're missing something, like a component to your meal because you don't have the vegetable?

Evan: Think about this, how many people drink some form of liquid with a meal? They need to, have to, most people, which is really not good for digestion, because you don't want to go diluting enzymes and et cetera. I think that if you have vegetables in your meal, you don't need to drink with a meal, because the vegetables add just the right amount of liquid and fiber to allow everything to go down. What I tell people is if you feel the need to drink with a meal, chances are you just don't have enough vegetables in there. Once you do, you'll find you add some vegetables to it, your digestion will actually improve because of the impact of those enzymes is actually much greater now.

Nick: That only works if you chew the vegetables though.

Evan: That actually is an interesting thing, you should chew your food well. It just gives it more surface exposure, and it's already partially digested at that point.

Nick: You're not talking about a little side salad either. I've seen this video, we have a big video series coming out with Evan called [Iron Intelligence](#). It's a 12-week muscle building plan, and in the nutrition video of that, we follow you around for a day, and watch every meal you eat, watch you prep, watch you shop for meat, go out in your garden. These aren't a little McDonald's salad on the side, this is a lot of kale, right?

Evan: I eat a lot of kale. Lately, I've been into cabbage.

Nick: Cabbage is great.

Evan: Crisper vegetables in general I think are a good choice. Bodybuilders love broccoli for whatever reason, but it's so boring.

Nick: Not if you steam it.

Evan: It's okay. There's so much stuff out there, open up your eyes and try something different.

Nick: Do you feel like maybe people are trapped by their association of vegetables with carbs somehow?

Evan: Yeah, maybe. I think most people are just trapped with the association of vegetables when they were kids.

Krissy: I was going to say, broccoli and asparagus, those are the two that we always see over and over. If you're going to have vegetables with your lean protein, it's one of those two. Don't go anywhere else, stick with those two.

Evan: Why those two? I don't know how they got their foothold in bodybuilding, but they did.

Nick: Asparagus in particular, because if you eat a lot of asparagus, you don't feel good.

Evan: No, and I know how true this is, the natural perspective on it is too much asparagus will actually irritate the kidneys.

Krissy: It is true, it's a natural diuretic.

Evan: I don't think it's really good to consume it on a daily basis.

Krissy: Nick and I were talking about this when we were walking over, I love vegetables. I have my own garden ... We were actually talking about we were going to chat with you about gardening and stuff. Picking out vegetables, trying new recipes, trying all sort of new things, growing them, and it goes so much beyond that. I don't grow my own broccoli or asparagus. I grow peppers, I grow squash, I grow tomatoes.

Nick: Broccoli kind of sucks to grow.

Krissy: When you limit your head space to think that those are the only vegetables that you can have, or those should be just a side dish, you can make an entire meal, or even the main part of your meal out of squash and then add to that.

Evan: To be totally honest, if I weren't a bodybuilder, and my protein requirement wasn't what it was, I would easily make a couple meals out of the day vegetable-based, even mushrooms. Mushrooms are great. I actually cut down an oak tree last year, the trunk is still down. I propped it up when I cut it so it's elevated off the ground, and I bought inoculation buds for shiitake mushrooms. You have to go around the tree, drill a bunch of holes in it and pound the plugs in. I can't wait to grow some mushrooms.

Nick: I've only had dried shiitake mushrooms, I don't know what the fresh equivalent would taste like. I so often think that some vegetables you grow them in a garden, and they taste like they normally do. Fresh carrots are so amazing.

Evan: Interestingly, because people say mushrooms, who cares, how much protein is in mushrooms? Just recently someone sent me a link to a patented, or some type of novel ingredient that was comprised of some different types of mushrooms designed to boost the O₂ outlet. I think that the link between health and performance and appearance is actually much more intertwined than people care to realize.

Nick: I don't want this to necessarily be the vegetables and bodybuilding podcast, but I do want to ask you one more question. In this nutrition video, I think it's you who refers to vegetables as the fourth macronutrient. I was wondering how your views on that changed over time, because you've been lifting and bodybuilding since you were a teenager, right? How have your views on nutrition grown to that point, which is an interesting hook, consider it a whole different category.

Evan: Not because ... You don't need vegetables to get bigger and stronger. It's not as pertinent as your intake of fats, carbohydrates, and proteins. That being said, I think there's such a valuable source of micronutrients. This is the argument that I make so many people use supplements. I love

supplements, I'm a big believer in supplements, but how can you place a large emphasis in supplementation, and then not include a lot of vital nutrients in your diet? What are supplements, if not micronutrients, unless of course you're doing protein powders and stuff like that. Vitamins, minerals, and a lot of these very specific nutrients are micronutrients. I think the 2 are ... Yes, I will not go a day without eating vegetables.

Nick: Was it always that way?

Evan: Pretty early on, I felt a need ... With all the protein, it seemed kind of natural, it wasn't balanced. There were times when I was eating less vegetables, and I noticed more indigestion and things like that. When there's plenty of vegetables in your diet, there's no reflux or anything like that. I think a lot of guys, this is something that they experience with high protein intake. A lot of guys, if you talk of them, they have a lot of problems with reflux, indigestion, et cetera. I think that if they just changed that one simple thing, and included more vegetables in their diet. When I say vegetables, I'm talking about going beyond just an iceberg lettuce salad. Something substantial, leafy greens, and what not. It would really change things for them. I've had people tell me that, "I started eating more spinach or kale, and I feel so much better."

Nick: That is kind of woven in there somewhere, is feeling as good as you look. A lot of guys, they'll get bigger, they'll get stronger, but they don't necessarily feel good. Are you surprised by how good you feel given how big you are?

Evan: I feel pretty good.

Nick: Glad to hear that.

Evan: Right now I'm almost 290 pounds, and I feel good. I can't go out and run a 5K probably, I'd be in some pain.

Nick: We're actually going to do that next, that's the next video.

Evan: Overall, I feel good. I sleep well, I've been fortunate to not have any muscle tears or any acute injuries. Again, that goes back to nutrition, I think. If you keep the tissue healthy, stay hydrated, eat well, I think it has a lot to do with the integrity of your tissue.

Nick: Sure, I want to go back to when you were a younger guy, starting out too, because it's not very often we have the opportunity to talk to someone who is at a truly elite level in their sport. It's always interesting to me to try to envision that pathway from this is something I like, to this something that any given day I'm one of the top 10 or 15 in the world at. Bring us back to you before you were a bodybuilder. You grew up in Connecticut, right?

Evan: Trumbull, Connecticut.

Nick: What kind of town is that, and what kind of bodybuilding culture is that?

Evan: If anything, maybe football is more pertinent there. Being in the tri-state area, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, there is a fairly decent bodybuilding culture in the northeast. Growing up, I think a lot of it had to do with growing up in the '80s. When you look at what was going on in the '80s, it was bodybuilding, it was cool, it was accepted. Even cartoons, look at the cartoons I watched

when I was growing up. He-Man, Thundercats, and everybody was jacked. I had these action figures, and I said these guys look cool.

Nick: I saw a guy dressed up as He-Man in his full body suit on Halloween the other night, and it reminded me of just how extreme it was at the time, and how normal it is now. I look at that guy and I think I work with that guy. We were bombarded with that constantly.

Evan: There was a lot of muscle back then. I think that had a lot to do with it. I grew up in the family as well. My uncle, my father's younger brother was a WWF wrestler.

Nick: What was his name?

Evan: His stage name was Paul Roma. My father and him don't really get along, so we don't really see him or anything. My father was always muscular and strong, and I think it shapes your idea of what masculinity is supposed to be. As a kid, watching Arnold Schwarzenegger, and he's kicking ass, that's cool. I like that, I identify with that.

Nick: That was something you had an interest in. Were you a scrawny kid?

Evan: I was a fat kid.

Nick: Bodybuilding was a different outlet then? Not the classic sand-kicked-in-the-face skinny kid?

Evan: No, I could beat up kids 5 years older than me.

Nick: If you chose to.

Evan: If I chose to. Bodybuilding was never that I wanted to get strong so that I can seek revenge, or anything like that. It was something that I saw as a physical ideal. I looked at it, and thought that looks awesome, I really like the way that it looks.

Nick: The result, or the lifting?

Evan: The physique itself. I thought it was a very ... It just looked great. Still to this day I do, when I see ... If I look at a trophy, I can say this looks awesome. It's cool, I think it's cool. For me, truth be told, I would be happy just being skinny. When I reached a certain point going into high school, I got talked into going out for freshman football. All the summer and spring training, all the running and the drills, et cetera. I never took much interest in sports, I couldn't really be bothered. I was always active outside and doing stuff, but I was never really into team anything. I got talked into going, and I did. I went through all the training, all the summer and spring stuff. Come fall, come time to play, I had no interest, but I really thought I loved all that training. The running, the drills, this and that, the weights. At that point, I said screw it with football.

Nick: You just walked away?

Evan: Yeah, and I got hounded by the coaches and stuff.

Nick: How could you?

Evan: I was a good sized kid. Probably, had I taken an interest in it and actually wanted to pursue it, I probably would have been halfway decent at it.

Nick: Until you got injured. We have these transformation stories on the site that we publish all the time, I can't tell you how many times I've heard football introduced me into lifting, but then I got totally fucked up by football, and then lifting was all I had left. That wasn't you, you were ahead of the curve on that one.

Evan: Yeah, I got out early. I actually just started running. I worked my way up to running 6 miles a day, and I lost 70 pounds in a year. I had no clue what I was doing with the eating, it was just like starve yourself and run as much as you could. I was skinny, but I wasn't like once I lose this weight I'm going to be ripped. I wasn't ripped, I didn't look the way that I -

Krissy: You weren't lifting during that time?

Evan: No, just running and starvation, that was it. I lost all this weight. I was in shape, and I felt good, but I said I think I need to weight train now if I'm going to look the way I want to look.

Nick: You finally had to walk into the weight room. Was this in a school weight room, or in the classic basement with the Arnold poster?

Evan: I started out in my uncle's basement. He had an Olympic bench and some York dumbbells. They went up to maybe 60. He had a Universal station, so I made due with that. I rode my bike to his house everyday, and just trained next to the washer and dryer.

Nick: Was he guiding you through this?

Krissy: Did he program for you, or how did you know what to do?

Evan: I would try to get him to come down, but he couldn't really be bothered. He was working all the time. How did I? I had a book. You know what I had? I had this book, it was a book of exercises. It was illustrated, and it would show the bodybuilder at the start, midpoint, and finish of the exercise. I just would sit there, I would study it as a worked out. I can't tell you how many times I looked at that book.

Nick: Was this like a 1970's kind of book?

Evan: It was this spiral book.

Nick: Probably came with the bench or something.

Evan: I bought it at a weight store, it had an introduction by Bill Pearl.

Nick: That's a good start.

Krissy: I almost feel like it was probably easier to get started in the 80's and early 90's, because there were fewer things. Now, if you were to type in Google search how to get started, you're going to get a million hits. Where do you even start?

Evan: You're so right.

Nick: Half the people are trying to convince you to perform at an elite level. A book might actually help to speak to you at the level you're at.

Krissy: You want to do a basic squat, but instead you're going to get 400 variations on a squat, and none of them are going to be a basic sit down stand up squat.

Evan: Before you even try doing the squat, you're just going to be confused.

Krissy: Yes, exactly.

Nick: You had a bench press bench, or did you have a squat rack too?

Evan: There was a bench, but it was a squat rack, it was just welded steel, it had steps in it.

Nick: With a dip station on the back? I think I've heard you talk about it.

Evan: That was a bench I bought later. I had my dad buy it for me one year for Christmas. I loved it, I used the shit out of that bench. It was just in the basement, and I think it was a blessing, because years later my cousin was working at a gym, and they gave him one free membership to give to a family member, and he gave it to me. It became evident to me then, because you're going to this gym and you now have access to all this shit that you didn't have before. What I found, was after a couple weeks of it, I was just doing what I was doing in the basement. Really, only having a barbell and dumbbells, I learned how to do exercises with just that. You had the barbell row, and you had a dumbbell row and deadlift, and squat, and I don't think there was even a hamstring cross, so I had to use a dumbbell between my feet to do a hamstring curl. It was great, that was great, because it teaches you all the fundamentals. You learn that way. So when I went to the gym, I saw that you could mainly take half this shit and throw it out, because none of it is really useful. I think it was a blessing starting off with not much.

Nick: The classic Animal lifting videos, and even these videos, they take place in these wood-paneled gyms that feel like an uncle's basement.

Evan: That's the best stuff, it's really such a shame that gyms like that have gone goodbye, because there's just such a sense of community in gyms like that, and it's just raw, and it's raw in such a good way, because it's basic. Whether it's just guys, or it's guys and it's girls, nobody cares. No one is worried about what someone else is wearing, or if someone is overweight. No one gives a shit. You got a goal, and you're working towards it great, you're accepted. There's no sense of community in any of these corporate type gyms, and it's just weird. Maybe it's a societal reflection too, just where we are as a society.

Nick: One of the thing that bugs me about new gyms is they all have the same things, it seems like. Those sorts of gyms, when I watch you, there's some other videos that Frank McGrath is in some of these gyms that he says I can't believe there's this one totally weird thing that is no place else. Maybe it's some handle, or it's some pullover machine.

Evan: How great is that, because a lot of times those things came from members. You'd have a member that is a welder, or something like that, and they thought of something, a way to try to

improve what they were doing. It was heartfelt, and it was real. No one is even thinking about that now. They go to the gym, they use what's there, and that's it. There's no thought beyond it. There was a sincere, genuine desire to improve things, and to be better.

Nick: Who was the first bodybuilder that you knew?

Evan: That's a good question. Professional?

Nick: The first one that showed you that this person is not just a lifter, he's a bodybuilder. Your first vision into that world.

Evan: The first gym that my cousin got me a membership to, there was a guy working out there, and he was probably the first guy that I saw that really looked like a bodybuilder. He had a very small waist, and a very big chest, and he would wear shorts that are pretty short, and you could see he had great quads. He was always tan. He looked like a bodybuilder.

Nick: Did you interact with him, or was he someone that you just looked at?

Evan: A little bit, but that's another thing too. If you were going to interact with a guy at the gym, that's something that you earned, and it took place over the course of maybe a year or two. You weren't going to go up to the guy and bother him, because you have respect for him and you weren't going to disrupt his workout. In reality, you're thinking who am I to go up to him, and I'm going to wait until I have something meaningful to ask him, and I'm going to make sure that it was worth bothering him for.

Nick: Not just like, "Hey, what muscle does that work?"

Evan: Yeah, that's something that's changed too now. With the access to people via social media, the respect for other people's time and their interaction has really decreased, because people will ... I'm not offended by it, but it's ridiculous. People will just send me a direct message on Instagram like do you mind putting together a workout for me? Sure, I'll get right on that.

Krissy: Like I don't have anything else to do with my time.

Nick: Instagram and Twitter have the wildest comments, like "I want to lose 10 pounds, what do I do?" You just get thrown into a conversation that has nothing to do with it.

Evan: Which to me is so absurd.

Nick: Somebody who is just lost.

Evan: I don't think they even really care about your answer. I think they're just ... I've had people, the classic thing is you're out someplace, and someone just comes up to you with a drink in their hand, and they're like, "Hey, how do I lose this ... ?"

Nick: They do that cold therapy where they freeze it and massage it off. That's what you do.

Evan: Come one, let's just talk about something else. You're not really asking me this seriously. I would never do that to someone.

Nick: We're still at the beginning of that story. Now you are that guy, right? How did we get from one to the other? Who guided you from point A to point B, or did you guide yourself?

Evan: I was always very lucky in that I had people willing to offer me their help along the way. I was always very diligent, I was very serious in my effort, and when I had someone that was willing to help, I think it made a big difference.

Nick: You saw the value of that?

Evan: Yeah, absolutely. For me, I had just graduated college, and I was one year out of college. I was training at a local World Gym, and there was a guy who joined. I was a member before him, I don't know where he came from, and at the time I didn't know where he came from, but he was a big guy. We had become friendly, and we started working out together. I knew that he had competed, and as we became friends, we started training together regularly. He said, you should really do a show. I said it's something I thought about, that would be cool, I'd like to do it eventually, but I don't really know much about it.

Nick: You were training like a bodybuilder, with a split at that point?

Krissy: All through college, you trained, but never thought about competing?

Evan: I thought about it, but I didn't know the first step, I couldn't even tell you what the NPC was. I always say I was such a terrible fan of bodybuilding in that I never bought magazine subscriptions.

Nick: You bought action figures.

Evan: I bought food.

Krissy: I was going to ask what your diet was. When you were training, what was your diet? Were you still following a pretty clean eating style? Especially in college, too.

Evan: I lived home, so I was able to eat well. I learned early on the value of nutrition. Once I had got over the whole running thing, and semi-anorexia-

Krissy: Trying to get Nick to get over this whole running thing isn't working yet.

Nick: I'm not obsessed with it, I just like it.

Krissy: I know.

Evan: It's a great feeling.

Nick: Running in the hills and the mountains is just beautiful, I love the gym too, but there's nothing quite like it.

Evan: Running is excellent, it really is great. Once I finally got over that, and I realized that I needed to eat, I just exploded. From then on, I said food is important.

Nick: It was just a quantity thing too?

Evan: It was quantity, but growing up, I always ate pretty well. We didn't eat a lot of crap. My mom would buy Raisin Bran and Total. My cousin got all the cool shit. He lived next door, and he got Apple Jacks, I'd go over and eat his stuff. My mom would never buy bad stuff, so I always ate fairly well. It was always kind of looked down upon, eating a lot of processed stuff. We never ate frozen meals or anything like that. Throughout college, I ate a lot, I ate pretty well. I grew, I got big. I got up to 285 at one point. Granted, it was a little fat, but very strong. Now it's after college, and I'm in a little bit better shape, I'm probably around 260 or so. I said I should do a show. There's one coming up in 10 weeks, perfect, going to do it.

Nick: A little show?

Evan: No actually looking back, it's a good one. It was in New York, and all the New York shows are strong, because there's a lot of competition. NPC show, NPC Atlantic States, and it's a pretty strong show. Along the way, everyone was like what show are you getting ready for? I would tell them, and they said how are you doing that one, that's your first show? Plus, you can't win that show unless you train up at the gym. I heard every reason along the way why I shouldn't do it, but I still just did it. Again, I think it was my ignorance that saved me, I didn't even know much, I just did it. Really, if you are someone who has never competed before, and you go to a bodybuilding competition, and you see what the guys look like in top form, you say, "Oh my God, wow!" Even now, if I go to a show, even if I go to a local show and I see guys in shape, I say he looks very impressive. For someone who is 23 years old, never competed, had I gone to that show and seen the past winners, I probably would have been totally freaked out. I would have said there's no way I can compete with those guys. Not realizing that I too, could get in that type of form. I dieted for the show, I did it, I ended up being 225 on the dot. I was at the top of the heavys, and I was peeled. I busted ass for that show. I suffered. I remember being 3 weeks out from that show, and you get to that point where you're driving in your car, and you get someplace, and you have to get out and you can't move. Not because you're tired, but you're anchored. It takes you 10 minutes to move every time you have to move.

Krissy: Did your friend that convinced you to do it, did he program that for you?

Evan: No, I was always making myself suffer.

Krissy: Okay.

Evan: I never had a problem dealing with the pain or things like that.

Nick: That's what I think the hurdle is for a lot of people. They look at the physique on stage and think I can never do that. When you're hanging out in a bodybuilding gym, and you see the extent to which people are willing to suffer for it, that could also scare you away if you're not ready for it. It seemed like you were on board.

Evan: You have to like pain to some degree.

Nick: Right.

Evan: I guess probably because I associated pain with progress, or growth, that I embraced it. I

always figured that hurt like hell, it has to be good for something. I ended up winning the heavyweight class, and I won the overall. Still do this day, it was one of the most awesome experiences of my life, it was one of the most meaningful shows that I ever competed in. It was something I'll never forget. After it was over, I just went back to life, I just went back to working, and I really had no further expectations or aspirations, now I'm qualified. I'm going to go to this show, it was just something I wanted to do, and it really was only going to be something I just did once to do it. About a full year went by, and I went to watch the Nationals in Atlanta, someone talked me into going. They said you should go and watch this show, because I think you should compete in it. I think if you go and watch it, you'll feel like you could compete in it. I went, I saw it, okay cool. A lot of guys there that look bigger and better than I think I do. On the way back I'm sitting in the airport, and Dave Palumbo ends up sitting next to me. We end up taking, and you won the Atlantic States, and what are you doing next? Nothing, no plans. You should do the Junior Nationals. Okay, when's that? June. All right. I'll help you for it. I end up doing it-

Nick: You were back up at 260, 280?

Evan: Back around 280. Again, not in great shape, like I never tried to stay in any kind of shape in an off season, I just stayed big and strong. He helped me for that show, and I ended up winning the super heavyweight, the super heavy class, and the overall. I started to think okay, maybe I should do another show.

Krissy: Yeah, I'm pretty good at this.

Nick: Maybe there's a career here?

Evan: Even then, I still wasn't thinking career. It wasn't even on my mind. Dave said look, you just won the Junior Nationals, you absolutely have to do the Nationals later. Let me give you an idea of where my mind was at. My girlfriend at the time, now wife, was with me at the Junior Nationals. We had only been together at the time 6 months or so. It was kind of like a crazy introduction. It was prep and everything, and it's very out of the ordinary. She had come out to Chicago with me to the Junior Nationals, and the night I won, Steve Blechman the owner of Muscular Development said I want you to come to California tomorrow, because I want to shoot you for our cover. I said that's cool, and I remember thinking, because I said to Dave, what about Erica? I don't want to send her home by herself. She's been with me this whole time, and I feel like that would be messed up. I would just say I have to do a photo shoot, I'll see you at home. When I talked to Steve, I actually said to him I'll come, but you have to pay for Erica, which isn't really a big deal, but at the time I was only 24, and I look back and most people wouldn't have had ... Some guy gives you a cover opportunity, and you say I'll come, but you're going to this for me. I really didn't care to be honest. If he had said no, I would have gone home, I wouldn't have even cared. I wasn't even thinking that I'm going to make a career out of this. Even then, she was more important than that. He said yeah sure, no problem. She came, and it was cool, and I got on the cover of a magazine. Later on that year I did the Nationals and I didn't win. I took second to the guy, we were both in the super heavy class, and he ended up winning the overall, and he was tremendous. I came back the next year, and once I took runner up at the first Nationals, I said now it makes sense, I have to do it again. I think that's when it became-

Nick: Between that first one and the third one, fifth one, seventh one, was there less pain, or did you figure out that I did it wrong the first time, or did you kind of think this is really part of it, I kind of did it the right way every time?

Evan: I've had a couple ... Each prep is a little different. I've had some that hurt like hell, it's just so bad, and some that weren't so bad. It wasn't always correlated with how well I looked. It was tough to figure. Did I do it perfectly the first time around, no. I got to say, I hit it pretty good. It hurt, but I looked really good, it was some of the best conditioning I ever achieved. As you progress, there's such an emphasis in bodybuilding on size, so there's that ever-present pressure. Sometimes conditioning ends up taking a back seat to it, which I don't prefer. I like that look of super hard, and super conditioned, even if it's a little smaller. That's that.

Krissy: Has your training and diet changed a lot with the prep? Obviously, like you said with each prep it's a little bit different. Assuming there's tweaks, but I've heard some competitors that they might try more of a keto approach, or they'll go a few weeks where they'll go keto during a prep. One prep, they did all their cardio was low intensity steady state and another prep they did all HIIT. They're constantly trying different methods. Have you been pretty consistent on all of it, or have you tried some different things?

Evan: That's a good question. The first time around was high protein, low carb, low fat. When I worked with Dave, it was keto approach, and it worked well. To be honest, I don't feel that the keto approach is ideal for bodybuilding for a couple reasons, mainly because when you attempt to carb up for the show, your body, because you haven't been consuming large quantities of carbohydrates, and now all of a sudden you're going to carb up, it doesn't work. I don't know if it's an enzymatic deficiency, or what it is, but the body just doesn't really. If you cut anything out of your diet for a long time and then re-introduce it, the body just doesn't take it well. You're eating all these carbs, and you're getting full, hard and tight, you're just farting a lot.

Nick: I've heard that. They say keto is great, but when you go back to carbs, your body just goes I thought we were going the other way.

Krissy: It's like when you take out dairy and put it back in, like you said, it's all enzymes. Your body has enzymes that break down carbs, like it breaks down dairy or anything else, or protein, or fat, and when you start to limit that, your body's not going to be making those enzymes because it's conserving energy. Why would it waste it making those? Exactly like you said, it's just not going to function correctly. You're bloated, you're farting, it's just not pretty.

Evan: It doesn't work out good. Like I said, throughout the process and the prep using a ketogenic diet, you feel very good. I felt great using a ketogenic diet. My energy was very stable, my mood was stable, I slept great, the pain goes away, because I think your inflammation is so low from the absence of the carbohydrates.

Nick: They're not all greased up by fat.

Evan: Yeah, I think it's actually, dare I say, a health way to eat. I just hate to eliminate any one thing for too long or whatever, because I do think carbs have their benefit, they keep your metabolism up.

Nick: We live in a world of carbs, too. You're committing to being an outsider at that point.

Evan: Yeah, it's very easy to follow a ketogenic diet, you'd be surprised, because you can get protein anywhere. A chicken breast, a piece of fish, et cetera. A salad is always available or a side of vegetables. You can buy nuts at a gas station. It's not hard to pull it together. You will get-

Krissy: Judged. People will judge you.

Nick: You're going to be eating different than your kids, your friends, I'm going to just watch all the rest of this forever. No more beer.

Evan: I don't think it's good to just eliminate something indefinitely. That goes for veganism, or anything. I think anything that is just too extreme. If you were going to say that I think the over consumption of animal protein is not good for you, I'd probably tend to agree with you. I would say okay great, but what's to preclude you from ever again having an egg or a piece of fish? If it was once a week, if it was once a month, I think to say I'm never going to have it again is crazy, to be honest.

Nick: Especially with eggs.

Krissy: I love eggs.

Evan: To be honest, I think you are meant to consume animal protein, from an evolutionary perspective. I don't think veganism makes a ton of sense, but I can certainly understand the things that they find an issue with. Whether it's the treatment of animals, yeah, a lot of it's terrible. Even the argument about domestic versus wild animals. From an evolutionary perspective, there were no domesticated chickens and cows, it was different animals, so that makes sense, I get that. I don't think it's beneficial to forever remove an animal protein sources from your diet.

Nick: That makes sense, yeah. I want to talk a little bit more about size, because I think it's so interesting to people who think of a guy like you, that he's just so much bigger than me. You've been that runner guy, and then you got up to 280. How different did that feel, that extra 100 pounds? Day in and day out, does it just feel fundamentally different?

Evan: I think because I was a bigger kid growing up, I have friends that hit 220 and they were like I'm so out of breath. I think I can carry weight pretty well, I think I'm kind of suited for it. I don't think I'm meant to be 150 pounds. 150 pounds, 160, I felt like lightning. I felt like I weighed nothing. It was actually good in a way. I think even if I were to stop weight training now-

Nick: Or just stop eating-

Evan: I don't think I'd ever be under 220.

Nick: I remember asking something like this to Jay Cutler once, and he was like my natural weight is somewhere around 220 or 230, probably.

Evan: Yeah, Jay is a perfect example, because he's not a little guy.

Nick: Is that where you'd put your natural weight, like I'm going to stop eating to keep this up and training to keep this up, you just fall down to about that point?

Evan: I think if I eat 3 meals a day, and stopped working out, I would still be well over 220.

Nick: Interesting.

Evan: Did I feel different at 280? I felt a lot more powerful, definitely. To be honest, I was at two extremes, 160, or 280. I probably felt better at 160, but it depends on what you ask me. Better just walking around, better at 160. Better walking with 500 pounds on my back, 280.

Nick: Gardening, or picking a kid up off the ground, how well does your body serve you for that kind of stuff?

Evan: It's okay. To give you an example, earlier on in the year, it was springtime, and I had a lot of dirt. It was like 15 yards of dirt delivered to the house. Some was for the garden, and some needed to be spread to the front of the house, et cetera. A friend of mine, he was a young powerlifter, he was maybe 190 or so. He's in good shape, he's young, maybe 21 or so. He does landscaping and things like that. I said I've got work for you, I'll pay you, he's a good worker. I worked alongside him all day. I got to say, I outworked him. I could keep going, my stamina is pretty good.

Nick: You've got that cardio too, you got your ritualized cardio. A powerlifter might not have that.

Evan: That might be it, yeah. I walked away that day feeling pretty good, because he's over 10 years younger than me, he's a lot lighter than me and I did all that. I trained my legs after.

Krissy: I think too, sometimes there's a huge difference between someone who's maybe 180 versus 260, 270, you look at muscle mass, or just their training experience. They're going to have someone your size and training experience, higher bone mineral density that's going to weigh more, versus someone who is more sedentary. Higher muscle mass is going to carry more water, that's not going to slow you down or make activities and daily living any more difficult. 250 with a higher muscle mass versus 250 sedentary fat mass, obviously that person is going to be much more miserable. I think sometimes when people just hear, geez, you weigh 270, how are you doing these things? Visually, they're like this is a completely different picture than what's going on.

Nick: Also, now that serious training seems like it's more popular than perhaps in any point in my life. On TV, online, you just hear people training more intense. There's this culture of self care that kind of goes up around it, like I have to go home and do Netflix and stretch, or I got my torture devices. I'm always working on the mobility of this, or cranking on whatever, infraspinatus, my armpit hurts all the time. How much upkeep do you feel like, compared to a normal person on the street, your body requires?

Evan: A lot more than I used to. I think the cardio helps a lot. That's such a huge thing. I never used to do cardio in an off season, not because I was lazy, but I always felt like I like to keep things that ... I don't do them in the off season, that way when I do them pre-contest, I'm very responsive to them. It was always like I didn't want to start doing it year round, and then I have to do more of it pre-contest or I don't respond well to it, but not doing it now, it's not from a fat-loss perspective, it's not like I'm doing it because I'm trying to stay in shape. I'm doing it because blood flow is so important, and getting your lymphatic system going, and circulation, and movement. The body is meant to move. Now, I do a lot of work on the computer and stuff, I have a lot of clients that need help with nutrition, et cetera. I find myself sitting at a desk all day, and that is terrible. I feel like that's the one way ticket to death.

Krissy: Preaching to the choir here.

Nick: How do you do it? Do you stand, sit, kneel, move around?

Evan: I make sure I do cardio regularly, and also, I get up every so often. I walk around, stretch, go outside and get some fresh air, and then go back inside, whatever it is. Personally, I find that if I did manual labor everyday for the rest of my life, I feel like I'd live forever. I think that inactivity is one of the worst things. Even if you go to the gym and you work out hard for an hour a day, it's great, but it's not enough. When you're active all the time, the body just loves movement, I think. I think that's ideal. I wish I was on my feet all day.

Nick: Right up until you're actually doing it 7 days a week, working construction.

Krissy: I take it all back.

Nick: It's an interesting narrative to dig into, because I feel like hard training does kind of glamorize manual labor, but manual labor also develops a hump on your back and things like that, you know? We're privileged to be able to pretend to do that kind of stuff. One other thing that's interesting, talking to somebody who competes on a high level, and I'm reading a book right now by a guy who's a really literary guy. He's a fiction writer, and an editor, but also really seriously into bodybuilding when he was younger. He talks about how people think that this is just a bunch of bros, but you don't get it, this is actually performance art at the highest level, like a ballet dancer, like somebody else, not just a classic, my body's a sculpture. It's a totally artistic expression. As you got more serious, did that make sense to you, or is it still just you doing what you love?

Evan: I can tell you that I was never one of those guys who ... I met guys who didn't even care if they won or not, they just wanted to do their routine. You could have given me the training and all that, and I could have dieted for the show, and if the contest took place in the gym I'd have been happy. I was really never one for theatrics, or the limelight, or even performing. For me, it was always like cool, I'm in front of a crowd standing in my underwear. For me, it's not natural, to me.

Krissy: It is for Nick.

Nick: If you're on board with the competition-

Evan: Oh yeah, I do it.

Nick: I want to win, that's the price you pay, right?

Evan: For me, it was always more of a formality. I was like, this is what it takes.

Krissy: It's not so much that I'm training to put on this outfit, it's more to see that final package, which happens to include having to wear this.

Nick: You take a magnet, you put the posing suit on the fridge so you have to look at it every time you eat.

Krissy: That's what I do for spring break, I put up the bathing suit, like stay out of the fridge.

Evan: I think there's two kinds of people. There's the people that train for the show, and then there's the people that train for the training. They like the training and the dieting, and then there's other

people that do that just to get to the final stage. For me, it was always that I like the training, I like the dieting, and I would do that whether I was going to get on stage or not.

Krissy: I think those are the ones that are successful, because that's how you can continue to do it show after show. You're not going to be successful every single show. I just don't think you're going to win every single time, and the only way to get back to do another show after you lose a show, is to enjoy the process of doing it.

Evan: You have to like doing it, or at least love to hate it, or something.

Nick: At the same time, is the show even necessary after a while? When's the last time you competed?

Evan: I competed earlier this year in Ohio at the Arnold, and also at the Arnold in Melbourne, Australia. Is it necessary? I think it is, I think to some degree, because training just to get in shape, or training for a show are definitely two different animals. When you know that in 16 weeks I'm going to be on stage in my underwear, being out of shape is not an option, you know what I mean? It is constantly on your mind. Training to get in shape, you know that if it's so and so's birthday, if I have a piece of cake, maybe it won't kill me. It's different. I suppose if you were ... Can a person approach it the exact same way and seriousness and diet for a show, and just diet the exact same way they would for a show? I suppose they could, but for me, I think where I'm at in my career, it's good to, and I have actually come to like it more. It puts you in front of people, and it allows engagement with people, and that's valuable.

Nick: As a pro bodybuilder, you're a relatively young guy still. You look it. There are guys on the Olympia stage who are well into their 40's. Is the idea of doing it another 10 years, another 12 years, does that make you go hello, or do you think I can maybe do that?

Evan: Probably like 5 years ago, I probably said I have 5 more years left. Now I'm here, and I feel good. Interesting story, a kid that I train, his wife is the head of an ultrasound unit at a hospital not far from me. He asked me one day, he said would you be willing to come up on a Saturday morning? She knows you've been bodybuilding, and she'd be curious to look inside.

Nick: Under the skin, that would be fascinating. Can we do that today?

Evan: Hook me up. I said sure, and then I thought about it, do I want to know? You assume that doing this at this level, there has to be some repercussions. Does anyone really get away from it under the skin? I wasn't expecting to hear anything catastrophic, I was expecting to hear, this is because of this, or this is a little enlarged. I was expecting to hear your heart's a little enlarged, something like that. Surprisingly, she looked at everything. Liver, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, thyroid. She found a small nodule on my thyroid, which a doctor had told me about in 2009. I didn't worry a lot about it. Another guy came in, and he looked at my heart. They said everything was perfect. He said I can't believe it, your heart isn't even enlarged. The wall, the thickness, everything looks right. He says I'm really surprised, considering your size, and you're a bodybuilder, et cetera. She was even able to look at some arteries, and check if there was plaque formation, nothing. I don't know the extent of what you can or can't see in a ultrasound, but I said to her, if you saw something, you wouldn't not tell me, right? She said, no, believe me, I'm looking, I live to find things. I left there surprised, but also feeling really good, feeling like that's good to know. I've always tried to be semi-conservative, relatively speaking. Not abusing things as much as possible. I eat well.

Nick: All those veggies. The cabbage commission is endorsing him. Cabbage growers of the United States.

Evan: You see some bodybuilders kind of burn the candle at both ends. They beat up on their body in one regard to be competitive, and then they're also ... I know they do recreational drugs, or they smoke, or they drink. They don't eat well. I don't know, maybe it's not anything that I've done, maybe it's just pure luck.

Nick: Clean living is underrated.

Evan: I am such a huge believer in living a good life, and the power of a good lifestyle. I go to bed on time, eat well, try to keep stress under control, just try to live well. There's a lot of people that don't live well, and it doesn't depend on how much money you have. I know people with a lot of money, and they don't live well. Just the same, I know people who don't have a ton of money, and I think that they do live well. I think it's worth a lot.

Nick: Let's bring this around to the program that you're doing for us a little bit, too. It's an intense program, I've been working on it, I've looked at every single workout in it. Who do you have in mind, of all these people in your phases of your career, all the different people you've worked with, when you were writing this program, the [Iron Intelligence](#) that's going to come out later this week at Bodybuilding.com. We're trying to get the podcast up next week so maybe this can all be at the same time, who did you have in mind for that piece?

Evan: I definitely had in mind the younger lifter. I don't want to say just starting out, it could be someone who is literally just starting, or somebody who has been in the gym for a couple of years. Then again, to be totally honest, there's things that I need to remind myself of that I did in my basement, that I need to re-visit. The fundamentals never really get old. You really can't hear them enough, or practice them enough. It can really apply to anyone, but it's always most important to me, to try to lend some direction to younger lifters, because I think they get a lot of ... There's a lot of information, and not a lot of knowledge. The Internet is great in so many ways, it's crazy to think I actually saw people our age, we saw the beginning of the Internet. It didn't exist before. It's done so many great things, but it's also probably confused the shit out of people.

Nick: Programs are a dime a dozen, we give them away every single day on our site. Go somewhere else, you can find a million workouts and a million programs on muscle gain, fat loss. What can someone expect going through this 12 weeks?

Evan: I made a 12-week program. It's broken up into gaining strength, gaining size, and then putting it all together. Maintaining that size, and improving your condition. Does it have to be those four, does it have to be 4 weeks? If you're in week 3 of the first phase, and your strength is climbing, and that fourth week it keeps going, would I want someone to stop? I'd probably say, take the strength while you've got it. Don't say no to it. This was for the sake of putting together a program. What could you expect? Definitely, to get stronger, to reinforce the fundamentals.

Nick: Some of the strength workouts are 2 movements.

Krissy: One of the chest workouts is 2 movements.

Nick: The back workouts are deadlifts and rows.

Evan: When I started off, I thought I needed 50 exercises, I needed to spend 3 hours in the gym, and that was a lot of misguided effort. When I got older, and I started surrounding myself with people who knew better than me, and I learned that there was a difference between quantity and quality, there was a difference between working and training, there was learning what intensity actually is, and learning that in the beginning anything works. You can do everything wrong, and as long as you don't get injured, you're probably going to get a decent result. Everyone hits the wall, some people hit it sooner than others. The question always becomes, what do I do now? Most people will fail to properly ... They don't know what overload is, or how to induce it. I made it pretty far. Once I started training with certain people, I said wow, that's what training is, and then I experienced the whole different level of results.

Nick: Even in a 2-movement workout, you're like this is a lot harder than I expected it to be.

Krissy: You don't need all the bells and whistles.

Evan: I was getting ready for the [New York Pro in 2009](#), and Oscar Ardon, who previously helped Kai [Greene] for a couple of shows, he had asked me what do you normally do for legs? I probably rattled off 10 things.

Krissy: Roll out the list.

Evan: He said that's a lot of stuff. We're probably going to do like 2 or 3 things. I was like, that's it? We did it, and I was like wow. There's a difference between doing it and doing it. Again, I was fortunate to learn from people.

Nick: That workout, is it shorter and more intense, or is it just more intense period?

Evan: When you're training with the proper intensity, you cannot train for so long. It's not possible. When a set consists of you're squatting, and you complete 10 reps, and that would normally be where you stop, because you're worried that if you go down for another one you're not going to get back up. You say okay, pause for 5 seconds and breathe. Get a few more. Pause, and now he's almost lifting me through the reps, and you're walking that fine line. I can't tell you how many times that we dumped the bar. You're walking that line between I'm going to come back up, or I'm not going to come back up. That is training. When everything gives, that's it. When it's done, you literally fold, most people won't ever get close to that, because it's not a comfortable place to be. It hurts. Your lungs hurt, everything hurts. Your body is telling you to stop, and you want to stop, but then there has to be that I'm going to keep going. That's where all the difference is. That is overload.

Nick: That's a pretty profound place to hang out too. That level of intensity, we don't have a lot of that in our lives. There are 3 videos in this package that are totally incredible. They're the first 3 workouts in the program, so it's not like you're going to go through this, and you're going to do this. You're squatting, you're deadlifting, and you're talking about it. Talking about that intensity in that head space. I was wondering, as you've gotten earlier, is that head space, that intensity still accessible to you? Is it more accessible?

Evan: It's actually more accessible. I don't mind the pain anymore. Unfortunately, as you get older, there's some wear and tear. Luckily, no acute injuries but there's some nagging stuff. Sometimes

you feel like you're walking that line between, okay I'm going to get that final rep, or if I go down for that one, is something going to happen? That might be the last one I ever do.

Nick: That's cool. There's the kind of urgency, where your body has alarm bells going off, but we're actually going to make it through it.

Evan: I have friends that I have been training with for awhile, and we kind of laugh. We're not old, I'm 34. There's not a lot of miles, but there's some hard miles. We say, if we could have our body from when we were 20, forget it, we could rule the world.

Nick: Thanks for coming and talking with us. We've got a whole bunch of stuff planned for you in a couple of days. By the time this comes out, we'll probably have another video or two. Go to [Bodybuilding.com](#), and check out [Iron Intelligence](#), it's a pretty impressive program that will rock your world. How do people find you elsewhere on the Internet? You're on Instagram, I know.

Evan: I'm on [Instagram](#). I still frequent some of the [forums](#).

Nick: Any forums in particular?

Evan: I go on [Muscular Development](#). I went on [Bodybuilding.com](#) a while ago, and I was just so used to ... I only ever posted on [Muscular Development](#) because I was on an explicit contract with them for so many years, so I could never post anywhere else. I would post there, and on [AnimalPak](#). Once I was no longer under contract with them, I was like this is cool, I can post anywhere. I started looking at [Bodybuilding.com](#), and I just didn't even know where to start, so I never did.

Nick: It's huge, I think it's second biggest [forum](#) in the world.

Krissy: You can get lost in there.

Evan: It intimidated me.

Nick: That's your next challenge. All right, well thanks a lot, and we'll put some links on the page of some of the stuff we've been talking about.

Krissy Kendall, Ph.D.: All right.

Evan Centopani: Thank you guys.

Nick Collias: See you all next time.



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